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**Validating Her Pain vs Violating Her Pain**

**The Top 10 Selfish Reactions of a Defensive and Emotionally Immature Man**

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Your disrespect of your spouse’s hurt and betrayal may come out in several ways. When she displays pain after some “trigger” sets her back, your clearly selfish and poorest response almost always centers around YOU. At the core - it’s defensiveness. So self-absorbed, your response usually involves clearing your name by downplaying your failures and amplifying your changes thus either inadvertently or consciously putting the blame back on her. She doesn’t feel heard and validated; rather, she feels violated again by your low-grade and ego-centric attempts to justify yourself. This re-traumatization comes in many colours but here are the most notable defensive reactions to your spouse’s pain:

1. **Dominating**: You simply have no time for her pain. Your comments like “Haven’t we dealt with this” or “do we have to talk about this again” push her to be silent. When you hear her complaint, you disagree strongly by even intimidating, threatening, or raging at her. You act offended by her decision to open up and share where she is at. Your angry reaction almost always stops the discussion and shuts her up.
2. **Withdrawing**: You pull away so as to pout to show your disapproval. It’s the poor me game! You may isolate, sulk, or be silent. When their pain reminds you of your mistakes, you withdraw displaying your “hurt” because she has brought this up again. So, you walk or go silent. You are passively punishing her by ignoring her pain and feeling sorry for yourself and trying to make her feel sorry for you. Instead of comforting in the suffering YOU caused, you leave her to suffer alone. Nice job.
3. **Manipulating**: You show disrespect by sharing subtle strategies designed to make her change her mind. You will try to outtalk her, outwit her and outlast her thus attempting to convince your wife of your narrative not hers. How YOU see things is clearly enlightened. You disrespect her by your commitment to win this argument - to change her viewpoint.
4. **Minimizing**: You begin by explaining that her negative feelings are simply an overreaction. You declare extremes that you haven’t done to highlight that your failure could have been much worse. You might even tell stories of other men to de-emphasize your mess. You will make comments like, ‘you’re being a little extreme’, ‘that’s rather unfair’ or ‘you’ve already made your point’. You aren’t listening - you’re disrespecting her.
5. **Blaming**: Instead of hearing out and validating her pain, you are quick to point out some of her short comings and failures. You might even imply that she is at fault for how things ended up with you. She needs to bear much of the responsibility. For example, your wife may be sharing with you the many ways that your porn and acting out has really hurt her. You might respond with, “If you would pay more attention to me in the bedroom, I wouldn’t have had to resort what I did.”
6. **Rationalizing**: You are quick to deny responsibility for whatever caused the problem. There’s always an excuse - an explanation. You find a line of reasoning that can explain away any implication that you had any choice. It was the stress you were under, how bad the marriage had gotten, how lonely you felt. You might hide behind the strength of the addiction and that you couldn’t help it. Once tempted or triggered, for most men, there’s no coming back. Besides, it could have been a lot worse.
7. **Gaslighting:** This reaction seeks to undermine another person’s reality - in this care your spouse - by denying facts, her memory of events or her feelings. In a strong statement of confidence, you say “that’s not the way it was!” You say things like “you never said that” or “that’s not the way you remember things”. Your wife, as a target of your gaslighting, is manipulated into turning against or questioning her own cognition, her emotions, and who she fundamentally is as a person. It’s crazy-making.
8. **Justifying:** At the heart of the justifier is the theme - “it’s not my fault”. You challenge her that she doesn’t understand the strength of your addiction. If she only knew the depth of your pain. How hard you’ve tried. What you have been going through. You even try to justify yourself through a historical defense pointing out mistakes parents made, the age you ran into porn…blah, blah blah. You completely invalidate her pain by laying out your alibis for your behaviour.
9. **Over-Reacting:** You disrespect your wife by giving an exaggerated response that is far beyond what she is looking for. You say things like ‘what’s the point - you’ll never ever forgive me’ or ‘I might as well leave. You would be better without me - better still if I were dead.’ These types of embellished comebacks are to garner her sympathy, sidetrack the point of her sharing her hurt and invalidate her pain by trying to have her think about YOU instead of you caring for her.
10. **Whining:** The conversation shift from her pain to YOUR pain is almost seamless. You may even get emotional - popping out a few tears. You want sympathy - you don’t want to be held responsible. It’s an attempt to take the focus off her pain. Due to your selfishness, you are quick to talk about how hard this is for you to face all the times she brings her hurts up again. The implication is that she is unforgiving, punishing and cruel. Poor you.

Note: I credit some of the listed selfish reactions to **Dr. Henry Cloud** - author of ***Boundaries***.

**SCRIPTURE TO CONSIDER:**

**Phil. 2:3,4** - (NIV) - Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, **4**not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

**Phil. 2:3,4** (TPT) - Be free from pride-filled opinions, *for they will only harm your cherished unity*. Don’t allow self-promotion to hide in your hearts, but in authentic humility put others first and view others as more important than yourselves. **4**Abandon every display of selfishness. Possess a greater concern for what matters to others instead of your own interests.

**Phil. 2:3,4** (AMP) - Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit [through factional motives, or strife], but with [an attitude of] humility [being neither arrogant nor self-righteous], regard others as more important than yourselves. **4**Do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

**Prov. 14:9** (NIV) - Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright.

**Prov. 14:9** (NLT) - Fools make fun of guilt, but the godly acknowledge it and seek reconciliation.

Prov. 14:9 (AMP) - Fools mock sin [but sin mocks the fools], but among the upright there is good will *and* the favor *and* blessing of God.

**Prov. 28:13** (NIV) - Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

**KEY WORD FOR THE DAY - EMPATHIZE - Don’t Defend!!!**

LISTEN. VALIDATE AND HUMBLY OWN and ADMIT to the pain you have caused. The sooner the better! STOP ALL SELFISH REACTIONS and work hard to VALIDATE HER PAIN!